



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY
AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING**

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND EMPLOYEES WELL-BEING

Alistina Anak Apet

Previous studies have been reported that workplace spirituality has a relationship with employees well-being because spirituality can give effect to the employee's well-being especially in the workplace. Hence, this present study was to investigate the relationship between the dimension of workplace spirituality and the employee's well-being in terms of emotional, social, psychological and spiritual well-being. The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between mindfulness, compassion and self-transcendence and well-being. This study was conducted in a government agency with 100 respondents returned the questionnaire. This study uses Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and the data were analyzed by using Pearson Correlation. It was found that there was a significant and positive relationship between workplace spirituality and well-being of the employees. Thus, the organization should offer more social support such as providing a worship facility that is conducive and comfortable to employees and also provides a counseling session.

Keywords: mindfulness, compassion, self-transcendence, well-being

ABSTRAK

MENGENAL HUBUNGAN ANTARA KEROHANIAN TEMPAT KERJA DAN KESEJAHTERAAN PEKERJA

Alistina Anak Apet

Kajian terdahulu telah melaporkan bahawa kerohanian di tempat kerja mempunyai hubungan dengan kesejahteraan pekerja kerana kerohanian dapat memberi kesan kepada kesejahteraan pekerja terutama di tempat kerja. Oleh itu, kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara dimensi kerohanian tempat kerja dan kesejahteraan pekerja dari segi kesejahteraan emosi, sosial, psikologi dan rohani. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara kesedaran, belas kasihan dan transendensi diri dan kesejahteraan. Kajian ini dijalankan di sebuah agensi kerajaan dan sebanyak 100 responden telah mengembalikan soal selidik. Kajian ini menggunakan Pakej Statistik untuk Sosial Sains (SPSS) dan data telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan Korelasi Pearson. Oleh itu, organisasi perlu memberikan lebih banyak sokongan sosial dalam kalangan pekerja seperti menyediakan kemudahan ibadah yang kondusif dan selesa kepada pekerja dan melaksanakan sesi kaunseling.

Kata kunci: Kesedaran, Belas kasihan, Transendensi diri, Kesejahteraan

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of Study

Spirituality does not only involve in a formal religious practice where spirituality and religion are related to each other and this spirituality also can give effects to the well-being of employees in the workplace. The low spiritual among the employees, especially in the workplace, can lead to job pressure and burnout. The extreme job pressure will cause employees to experience disengagement, and low commitment towards their job where it will affect the employees work performance. Gallup (2013) reported that “the US employees were in a state of active disengagement, emotional disconnection, and exhaustion at work” while a “later report indicated that 71 percent of millennials who were not engaged were actively disengaged at work” as stated by Gallup (2016). Thus, job pressure will give a negative impact to the employees as well as to the organization itself where there will increase the number of absenteeism, turnover, stress, and imbalance work-life.

Organizations should take seriously about their responsibility to enhance the employee well-being by promoting spirituality at workplace. Through this implementation, it can enhance the performance of employees as well as to reduce the stress among the employee. As stated by Krishnakumar and Neck (2002), they argued that “supporting organizational strategies that promote spirituality at work can bring benefits in the areas of creativity, honesty, trust, sense of achieving personal and individual commitment, which again result in improved organizational performance and achievement”. In addition, employees who face greater pressure and stress in the workplace will give effects to their well-being which their probability of experiencing mental health is high. The high pressure also can cause chronic

illnesses to the individuals, for instance, have high blood pressure, heart attack, cancer, while someone that give up with their lives have a possibility to commit suicide. As stated by Boswell *et al* (2006), “chronic illness is pervasive in American society and may well be the source of stressors, impacting the subjective physical well-being of older adults which also more towards older employees”.

In addition, Marks (2003) mentioned that “chronic diseases account for about 70% of deaths in America and 75% of the costs of health care each year”. Thus, when the organizations promote spirituality in the workplace, it can reinforce the relation between spirituality and retention, workers health and to enhance feelings of well-being.

In Malaysia, in the findings of the AIA Vitality 2018 survey said that 50.2 per cent of Malaysian employees have at least one dimension of work-related stress with 18.2 per cent attribute their stress to financial concerns (Murugesan, M. 2018). Mental health is very important because it can affect the productivity in the workplace such as increase the number of absenteeism and poor performance among the employees. If the employers does not addressed the issues and the problems, it can give bad effect to the organization performance as well as to the employees performance that will cause high productivity loss and cause bad mental mental and well being of employees. As stated by Murugesan, M (2018) in the New Straits Times, the findings of the AIA Vitality found that 45.9 percent of employees are at risk with their physical activity falling below 150 minutes per week, and 32 per cent have one or more chronic disease such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, or stroke. Thus, both employers and employees have to concern about their health and well-being so that it will not give negative effect towards themselves. Employers have to make an intervention such as provide wellness program to the employees to overcomes the problems and issues that face by the employees and by that, the employees can improve their

work performance and create a healthy workplace that can avoid from any mental health problems and well-being.

1.1 Problem Statement

Workplace spirituality is a powerful force to employees lives, which helps employees combine their working and spiritual life together with more an exciting, meaningful and balanced job. It also potentially strong influence to the well-being whether in the level of individuals, organizations, and societies which helps to reduce work stress and burnout. As studied by Sheep (2006), the researcher state that “workplace spirituality has been suggested to have an influence on employee well-being”. However, the present research has not empirically examined the relationship between dimension of workplace spirituality and employees well-being in the overall life context, in terms of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being.

For instance, Vandenberg (2011) in his study covered only “psychological well-being”, McKee *et al* (2011) only measured “mental well-being, health behaviors, physical well-being, and spiritual well-being”, Luthans *et al* (2013) focused on only “overall well-being and satisfaction in certain domains”, Kaplan *et al* (2014) measured only “positive affective well-being and negative affective well-being”, and Yoon *et al* (2015) focussed on “hedonic well-being and the meaning aspect of eudaimonic well-being”. Thus, to address the above-indicated research gap, this study makes another contribution by empirically examine whether dimensions of workplace spirituality which is mindfulness, compassion and self-transcendence can enhance employee well-being in terms of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being.

1.2 Research Objective

1.2.1 General Objective

To determine the relationship between workplace spirituality and employees well-being.

1.2.2 Specific Objective

1. To determine the relationship between mindfulness and employees well-being.
2. To determine the relationship between compassion and employees well-being.
3. To determine the relationship between self-transcendence and employees well-being.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

Ha1: There is a significant relationship between mindfulness and employees well-being.

Ha2: There is a significant relationship between compassion and employees well-being.

Ha3: There is a significant relationship between self-transcendence and employees well-being.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

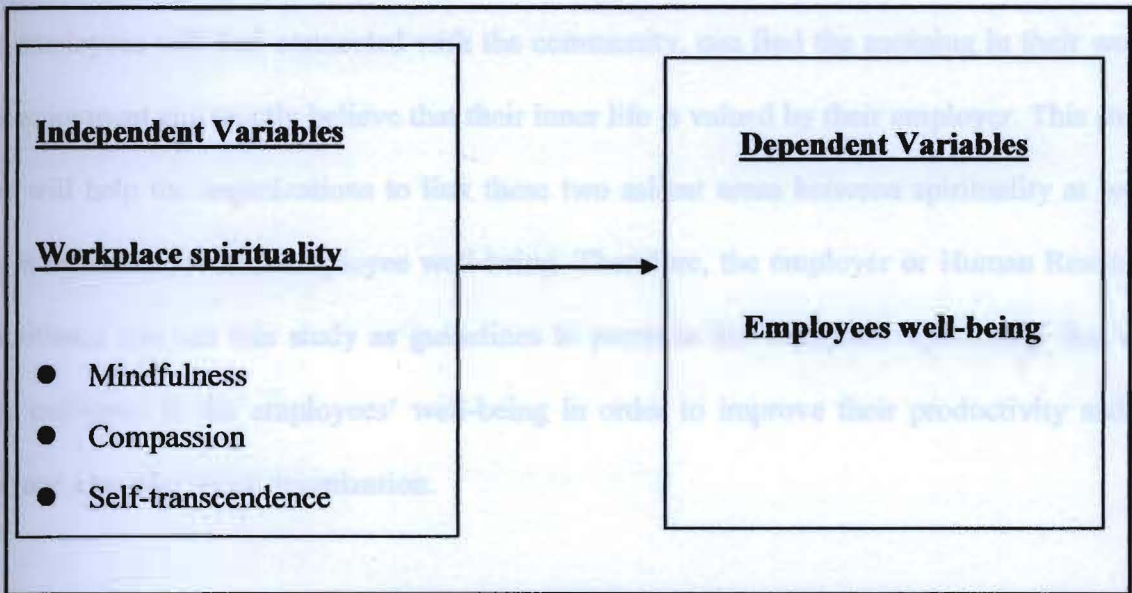


Figure 1: The conceptual framework

1.5 Significant of the Study

This study will fill the gap between workplace spirituality and its impact on the well-being in terms of emotional well-being, social well-being, psychological well-being and spiritual well-being. This study will help the employees to improve their performance and practices the spirituality in the workplace for their own benefits in terms of health and well-being. A healthy employees can produce a good quality of productivity to the organizations as well as can enhance the employees spirituality in the workplace where the employees can find their inner life and find the meaning of their work through mindfulness, compassion and self-transcendence.

The finding from this study can be used as a guideline by the Human Resource practitioner in facilitating organizational health in order to enhance the employees' well-being. These findings show that employee performance was influenced by employee well-being which can give the outcome to be a healthy organization. In other hands,

workplace spirituality also can influence the employee well-being where through spirituality, the employees will feel connected with the community, can find the meaning in their work, feel enjoyment and mostly believe that their inner life is valued by their employer. This study also will help the organizations to link these two salient areas between spirituality at work and its influence towards employee well-being. Therefore, the employer or Human Resource practitioner can use this study as guidelines to promote the workplace spirituality that can give outcomes to the employees' well-being in order to improve their productivity and to produce a healthy work organization.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The limitation of the study uses a questionnaire to collect the data. Therefore, the accuracy and validity of the results depend on the willingness of the respondents to give a frank and honest response that can give effect to the result where there will be some biased and not accurate result. Hence, it is necessary to use various measuring methods to collect data such as using a combination of the quantitative and qualitative method in this study in order to validate the findings.

In addition, the study was a cross-sectional where the data was collected from an organization in a particular industry where the target respondents only in the public sector. It was necessary to extend the research with a broader sample by exploring other industry whether it in the public or private sector in order the researcher can compare the results to validate the findings.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Workplace Spirituality

Conceptual definitions

Giocalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) mentioned that workplace spirituality is “a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees’ experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy”.

Operational definitions

The general themes of workplace spirituality are mindfulness, compassion and self-transcendence.

1.7.2 Well-being

Conceptual definitions

Ryan and Deci (2001) stated that “well-being is a complex construct that concerns optimal experience and functioning”.

Operational definitions

Aspects of well-being are emotional, psychological, social and spiritual that assessed to life satisfaction, achieved personal happiness, health concerns, and happy lifestyle.

1.7.3 Mindfulness

Conceptual definitions

Bishop *et al* (2004) defined mindfulness as the ability or propensity to engage in “nonelaborative, nonjudgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged”.

Operational definitions

Mindfulness is to reflect the experience of the individuals through attention and awareness rather than what they think their experience should be.

1.7.4 Compassion

Conceptual definitions

Neff (2003a) defined compassion as “an attitude that is relevant to every personal experience of suffering and that entails three interacting components: (1) self-kindness vs self-judgment, (2) a sense of common humanity vs isolation, and (3) mindfulness vs over-identification”.

Operational definitions

Compassion is when individuals have the self-kindness, a sense of common humanity and a mindful approach to suffering.

1.7.5 Self-transcendence

CHAPTER 1

Conceptual definitions

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vago and Silbersweig (2012) defined self-transcendence as “the development of a positive relationship between self and other that transcends self-focussed needs and increases prosocial characteristics”.

1.1 Concept of Transcendental spirituality

As stated by Frost & Daloz (2013), “spirituality remains difficult to precisely define. However, a common agreement that it refers to a connection with a larger reality that gives

Operational definitions

Self-transcendence is to observe one’s thought and feelings, objective events in the mind, and to do reflections of the self.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has briefly discussed the background of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, research hypothesis, conceptual framework, significance of the study, limitations of the study and definitions of terms. The next chapter of this study will discussed the literature review where the researcher will discussed the theories and concepts as well as the past studies that related to the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Important Concept in the Studies

2.1 Concept of workplace spirituality

As stated by Peteet & Balboni (2013), “spirituality remains difficult to precisely define, but there is general agreement that it refers to a connection with a larger reality that gives one’s life meaning, experienced through a religious tradition or, increasingly in secular Western culture, through meditation, nature, or art”. As mentioned by Weitz, Vardi, & Setter (2012), “workplace spirituality could help in improvement of employee productivity and contribution to the organization, employee problem solving and intuitive capacities, and organizational efficiency of human resources utilization”. Vitell *et al* (2016) stated that “spirituality is a universal phenomenon that can influence individuals’ ethical decision making”. In contrast, Zsolnai and Illes (2017), noted that “spirituality refers to a reconnection to the inner life and an appreciation of universal values that transcends egoism and reinforces empathy for all living beings”. Thus, workplace spirituality can enhance the employee’s productivity and to develop the individual’s manners that can understand the values of oneself and others and to motivate themselves.

High spiritualism in one’s will encourages them to a work with open-mindedness and more motivated as claimed in their respective religions. Zou, W.C., and Dahling. J. (2017) state that “workplace spirituality can imbue a greater significance in the organization’s work, casting tasks in a light that demonstrates their importance to other people and society in general”. In addition, Rohit *et al* (2015) indicated that “increasing spirituality is proposed as a

stress management and treatment strategy, as a human being is a biological, psychological, social and spiritual being at the same time and emphasizing their spiritual needs is essential, as they constitute a healthy lifestyle". In sum, spirituality in the workplace can help the employees to find their inner satisfaction which can enhance the work performance and to help employees to embrace changes in every aspect of life which prepare themselves to adjust and adapt in all of the changes.

Spirituality and religion are a close relationship but have a different definition and concept. As stated by Canda (2008), the expression of spirituality can be in religious or non-religious forms. Zinnbauer *et al* (1997) mentioned that spirituality is not related to any religious belief and not synonymous with religiosity but Cragun *et al* (2016) stated that spirituality is generally understood as the personal ways people believe in and interact with supernatural or spiritual entities. In contrast, Henningsgaard & Arnau (2008) argued that religion includes the belief and practices of individuals belonging to an organized group, while for spirituality it involves the feelings and experiences connected to find the meaning and purpose in life. Cragun *et al* (2016) also stated that religiosity refers to the ways people can be religious by affiliating with a religion, attending services, participating in study groups, donating money, and any number of other practices.

2.2 Concept of employee well-being

Organizations did not take seriously about their responsibility to enhance the employee well-being and this situation can cause turnover, absenteeism, and stress among the employees. As stated by George *et al* (2015), "well-being is a positive psychological state that arises from how an individual perceives and assesses their life and it is generally formulated around happiness and quality of life". However, Juniper (2012) suggested that well-being is considered the cornerstone of workers' happiness when it comes to their job. In

contrast, Ajala and Mojinyinola (2013) suggested that when workplace spirituality is introduced within organizations, there is the potential for employees to experience happiness and joy characterized by well-being. Employee well-being is important where it is a root of organizational health and this will give outcomes and benefits to the organizations to maintain the employees. As mention by Ajala and Mojinola (2013), they noted that the awareness of employee well-being and a holistic approach the interest of engaging and developing individuals to a new physical, mental, and spiritual levels can help the work environment.

As stated by Cohen and Johnson (2016), they characterized “well-being as involving experienced contentment and reported satisfaction with life”. In term of contentment, researchers have demonstrated that religious and spirituality factors are correlated with decreased anxiety and decreased depressive symptoms (Koenig, 2012; Rosmarin *et al*, 2013). Diener *et al* (2003) mentioned that “individuals with a high sense of well-being experience more positive emotions and have a positive assessment of the events around them, meanwhile, in contrast, individuals with a poor sense of well-being asses their life events negatively and experience more negative emotions such as anxiety, depression and anger”.

Van Cappellen and Rime (2014) stated that “positive emotions are also an important component of religious and spiritual practices”. It because when someone has high in religious or spirituality, they have positive emotions which can contribute to their well-being and have a good health. For instance, Krause and Hayward (2013) found that an “emotionally expressive worship style such as where members openly express their emotions during worship services is associated with life satisfaction”. When they achieve their life satisfaction, the probability to have stress in life are low as well as they can avoid a poor health. Thus,

employees who have high religious knowledge and belief in God are strongly to have positive emotions and have a good well-being.

Therefore, relationship between spirituality and employee well-being can be reinforce by promote spirituality at work to ensure that the employee's health and feelings always in stable condition and thus, it can improve the organizational performance and mental health among the employees.

2.3 Theoretical Evidence in Supporting the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being

2.3.1 Conservation of Resources Theory (COR Theory)

Conservation of resources theory was proposed by Hobfoll in 1989. This theory is based on the supposition that people strive to retain, protect, and build resources and what is threatening to them is the potential or actual loss of these valued resources. The basic tent of Conservation of resources theory (COR) is "people are motivated to acquire and protect resources that can help them attain goals" (Hobfoll, 1989; 2011). As mention by Halbesleben *et al* (2014), resources can be tangible or intangible, but they all share the common quality of helping people attain and defend their goals. When the employees lose the resources, they will be more motivated to invest resources in order to protect and recover against resources that loss. Therefore, Hobfoll (2001) stated that the "strength of COR theory is that it goes beyond the prediction of stress and strain to understand motivation following the experience of strain". This theory will help the employees to control their emotion and maintain their resources from loss. Uncontrollable of emotion can give impact to the employee's well-being where the employees are unable to cope with the stress that can affect the job performance, job satisfaction and loss high productivity. By practice spirituality in the workplace, the employees can manage their